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WIFE AND MOTHER IN A TECHNICAL SOCIETY;

Motion Pictures for Discussion

on

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE AMERICAN WOMAN IN FAMILY LIFE TODAY.

By Dorothy Anthony
President, Motion Picture Council
Washington, D.C.

To Family Life Specialists:

This list of films with suggestions for discussion has been prepared for us through the courtesy of Mrs. Dorothy Anthony, President, Motion Picture Council, Washington, D.C.

Her contributions to the program of the Extension Family Life Conference in May 1948 have been valuable aids to our extension workers. We appreciate this additional assistance that Mrs. Anthony has given us and her continued interest in our extension family-life program.

Lydia Ann Lynde

Mrs. Lydia Ann Lynde
Extension Specialist in Parent
and Family Life Education

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* All the motion pictures whose titles appear on the following list are on 16 mm. films.

Most of these films can be purchased for a nominal sum.

Information on prices can be obtained by sending your requests to the source listed for each picture.

WIFE AND MOTHER IN A TECHNICAL SOCIETY

Motion Pictures for Discussion
on
The Function of the American Woman in Family Life Today

We women, whether married or single, are generally concerned with building for the future, for peace, for the improvement of our society. We want these things in the present, too. We want good communities, good families, good children. We are troubled about breakdowns in family life, confusions in standards, lack of mental and physical health, neglect of religion, because they are all symptoms of the general disorder of this so-called technical society - the environment in which we are functioning.

As practical women, we want to know where the trouble lies, what part of it is our fault, what we can do about it now.

Is it not possible that a solution might come through the efforts of a great community of well-integrated individuals possessing a definite conception of their functions, knowledge of available resources, adequate training, well-thought-out goals, and who will accept responsibility for as much constructive action as lies within their capabilities? Then our first job lies within ourselves.

How can we develop this community of well-integrated women?

How can we become better prepared for our jobs of wife and mother in this technical society?

How, even, can we find out just what our jobs are?

The following series of meetings is designed, through the process of thinking it out together, to bring about some clarification of the present functions of wife and mother. Through a study of a series of films showing the impact of modern technology on different patterns of family life, and a variety of situations where women are trying to meet the demands and problems of today's society, it is hoped to focus and stimulate discussion so that we will arrive at some personal conclusions about the functions of wife and mother in family life today.

Topic 1

THE GENERAL DISORDER OF SOCIETY

A Criminal Is Born. 2 reels. Teaching Films Custodials, 2 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y.

This film presents aspects of parental neglect. It is a highly dramatic story of four boys whose parents show varying degrees of interest and understanding. It shows that rival interests of business or community service can work tremendous damage on the child when they cause the parents to neglect him.

Marriage and Divorce. 17 minutes. March of Time, 369 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

This film presents a picture of the present breakdown in marriage, giving statistics, opinions of authorities, and some reasons for the situation.

The Search For Happiness. 17 minutes. March of Time, 369 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

In this picture we see a society where material values are predominant and spiritual values neglected. To conquer his environment man has invented machines which sometimes seem to be conquering him. The film states that we have mechanized and streamlined our houses, but that has not brought happiness and family unity. It shows people searching for happiness in isms and fads. How much is woman to blame for this state of affairs? What is her role in bringing about an improvement?

Topic 2

PERSPECTIVE ON FAMILY PATTERNS

When transportation and communication were difficult and people tended to stay with their own group, family patterns were varied and slow to change.

Now we see jungle tribes who, even today, are examples of primitive culture people like the Chinese who have maintained their own patterns of family life for centuries as well as Americans, Europeans, and Latin Americans, all feeling the impact of modern technology in their method of living and showing the consequences in their changing patterns of family life. We see changes in attitudes toward the aged, in methods of educating and training the young, in the interdependence of the family on trade and natural resources. We particularly see changes in the status of woman and in the functions of the wife and mother, both within the family in relation to the community.

The Family in Different Cultures

Good Neighbor Family. 20 minutes. Association Films, 35 West 45th Street, New York, N.Y.

The family life in the United States is contrasted with that found in Latin American countries. The closeness of family ties in Latin American countries is demonstrated, and the effect of industrialization on the Latin-American family is discussed.

Nomads of the Jungle. 2 reels. United World Films, RCA Building, 30 Rockefeller Center, N.Y.

This film shows the functions that women perform in a typical nomad family in Malaya existing on natural resources, and having only a slight contact with outside civilization. The people in this film, even in 1948, are still primitive.

Piping Family. 2 reels. International Film Foundation, 1600 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

This is a picture of a middle-class Chinese family which is making adjustments to postwar conditions in China. The family shows in many ways the impact of westernizing influences, but has clung to its basic ideals of the value of education and its traditional attitude toward the grandparents.

The Family at Different Periods in the Same Culture

The Pioneer Home. 1 reel. Coronet Films, Coronet Building, Chicago, Illinois.

Your Family. 1 reel. Coronet Films, Coronet Building, Chicago, Illinois

Another way of getting perspective on the changes that are taking place in woman's functions in the family is to compare family life in pioneer times with family life today.

These two classroom films are meant for primary grades, and have not the reality of the other films in this group, but, taken as a pair, they offer background for the discussion of environment and the effects of technological advances on the functions of the wife and mother.

Topic 3

MODERN WOMAN'S DELEMMA - "WHAT IS MY FUNCTION?"

Never before in history has woman faced so many decisions. Many areas that once were a matter of acceptance without thought of alternatives - such as marriage and children as the only occupation for women - are now a matter for conscious choice, with many possible combinations and adaptations to individual preference. What is this flexibility doing to woman? Is she healthier, happier, more capable? How has her role in the family changed? How have attitudes toward women changed? How has woman's position in the family changed? How does woman adjust to marriage after she has been used to economic independence and a job?

What is the function of the wife and mother today?

What training does she need?

Careers and Cradles. 11 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746
Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington,
D.C.

This film illustrates the changed attitudes toward women in worth-while jobs, the effects of technology on the kind of work women can, do and the variety of choices that are open to modern women. Must a woman choose between marriage and a career? Can she successfully divide her time between a professional job and marriage?

The Farmer's Wife. 16 minutes. The Film Center, 915 Twelfth Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C.

Whereas the search for happiness suggests the dissolution of family life, the loss of spiritual values, etc., this film presents the potent force that the mother can be in family life; how children, husband, community and even the chickens depend on her for direction, support, encouragement, and morale. It shows that being "just a housewife" is a very important job.

Because this film was made for the war effort, it has been withdrawn from general circulation, but because it suits this discussion it has been released for this use.

Topic 4

HOW HAS MODERN TECHNOLOGY IN THE HOME AFFECTED THE FUNCTIONS OF THE WIFE?

With modern sources of power, modern machinery, modern materials available to most homes, women have changed their ideas about what constitutes suitable environment. Are they adapting and using all that technology offers, from home appliances to city planning, to best advantage? Have they built a more adequate family life because of the opportunities that technical development in the home has brought? Have they changed their ideas because of these modern improvements, as to what are their functions as housekeeper? Does the family expect the same things of them as it did when more work was done in the home?

Kitchen Come True. 20 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746
Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

This film shows the old-fashioned kitchen, which kept the housewife busy all day, keeping the fire, fetching water, cleaning, canning, etc. The family in this film planned for years how to fix over the kitchen to meet their needs. They saved up, drew plans, and finally achieved their dream. It is not our modern factory-made kitchen, but it is what they wanted and what they could afford. They built most of it themselves, and it suits their needs in the environment in which they live.

Step-Saving Kitchen. 14 minutes. United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, 25, D.C.

This film can be borrowed from the 48 State film depositories. It may be purchased from Castle Films, Inc., 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N.Y.

The kitchen displayed in this picture is the essence of efficient planning for the care and preparation of food. It is a laboratory. In these surroundings woman's work is easier, faster, and more pleasant. Even a man would enjoy working here. Yet seen in contrast with Kitchen Come True, its emphasis is on the design of the room rather than on the personal story of the people who built it. Look at both these films together. How can a woman buying the streamlined kitchen put into it the warmth and sense of home and personal achievement that one feels in the Candaian Kitchen Come True?

The Way We Live. 64 minutes. British Information Service, 1910 K Street, N.W., Washington 5, D.C.

This is a long film for a discussion meeting, but it is included because it presents the modern concept of planning to fit individual needs. It is the story of a bombed-out family in England and how they are won over to the new city plan for housing. It demonstrates very well the use of mothers' meetings, educational lectures and debates to get community understanding and acceptance of the project and the importance of understanding the needs that are to be met by the project. It also shows the various relationships within the family group, with rifts, love affairs, and understanding that develop as the story progresses. The film portrays the conflicts and tensions that develop when the youngsters lack privacy and space.

Topic 5

HOW DOES MODERN WOMAN USE HER AUTHORITY?

There are many expressions in current use such as "ask the boss" which imply that the wife has the responsibility for final decisions. She has the authority for running her family. How does she use that authority? What is her philosophy of government? Does she believe in the autocratic "do it because I say so" control of the family group? Is she too busy or indifferent to exert more than a laissez-faire influence? Or does she understand how the principles of democratic government can be applied to family life? The films listed below furnish a good background for a discussion of family administration: What training is needed, where democracy may break down in family life, the woman's part in keeping her family running smoothly.

Democracy. 10 minutes. Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois.

Despotism. 10 minutes. Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois.

These films bring out some of the basic elements of democracy, such as shared power, shared respect. How can the ideas contained in the films be applied to family living? Are parents despotic? How can the mother develop a truly democratic family?

Family Life. 10 minutes. Coronet Films, Inc., Coronet Building, Chicago, Ill.

One way of achieving democracy in the family is to have a family council system of government. This film shows how it was done by one family.

You and Your Family. 9 minutes. Association Films, 35 West Forty-Fifth Street, New York, N.Y.

This film is a short presentation of problems that most parents have to cope with in the control of adolescents. The stories are presented from the point of view of the child and how he or she handles a situation when it is at variance with family ideas. Several possible alternatives of action, both on the part of the child and on the part of the parent, are shown. How can parents use democratic methods in such situation?

Topic 6

THE MOTHER AS A BUILDER OF PERSONALITIES

Because the mother has the first close contact with the child, she is the first factor in shaping its personality and developing its emotional maturity. She gives it the affection and feeling of security it needs when young, and gradually releases it to independence as it grows older. At the same time the mother has to care for the emotional needs of the other members of the family - husband, other children or members of the older generation. Do you feel that women today are being educated to understand and carry out their responsibilities for building adequate personalities and maintaining an atmosphere of good mental health in the family group? When, where and how should this training be given?

Feeling of Hostility. 31 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

This film is the story of an outwardly successful but inwardly incomplete personality. The causes of her feeling of resentment towards others and the resulting failure in personal relationships are traced from childhood. Though this girl is the central character in the film, we are more concerned with watching the mother. By observing her actions and attitudes, we can see how the mother affects the personalities of other members of the family. This film is best used with a psychiatrist as a consultant to answer audience questions and correct any misconceptions.

Fitness is a Family Affair. 15 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

This film tells the story of two families who live in the same neighborhood. One family, with its well-integrated mother and father and happy children, is the center of activity for the youngsters. The other family is a picture of disorganization. Gradually the well-organized family begins to affect the neighborhood, and its wholesome influence helps the disorganized family.

Meeting Emotional Needs in Childhood . 30 minutes. New York University Film Library, 26 Washington Square, New York, N.Y. (Produced by the Department of Child Study, Vassar College.)

The Groundwork for Democracy . 30 minutes. New York University Film Library, 26 Washington Square, New York, N.Y. (Produced by the Department of Child Study, Vassar College)

This film shows the responsibility of the parents to see that a child has two of his basic needs satisfied - the need for acceptance and security, and the need for independence, a feeling of competence and ability to contribute to the group - in order that he may take his place as a mature citizen in his community.

Topic 7

FAMILY GUIDANCE - A WOMAN'S FUNCTION

School buildings are being remodeled, educational theories changed, new methods introduced. From nursery school through college there are many places where the mother is called upon for decisions or advice. What are the basic considerations. What type of school does your child need? How good are the teachers? What are some of the other considerations?

Educational

The American Teacher. 17 minutes. March of Time, 369 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

This film presents the pros and cons of progressive education. It also points out that the mother as a citizen has a responsibility for the quality of education her community provides for all children.

Who Will Teach Your Child? 30 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C.

A study of the teacher's vital role in the child's development into steadily widening experience and understanding. The film shows variety of situations involving the teacher's relationship to pupils, parents, and community. Some of the essentials of good teaching are highlighted - adequate training; sympathetic understanding of children. It also shows how parents can undermine a teacher and spoil her effectiveness.

Another guidance function of the mother is that of helping her child adjust to others. The following films shows some of the ways and places that parents can help.

Adjustment to Others

Children Growing Up With Others. 25 minutes. United World Films, 30
Rockefeller Center, New York,
N.Y.

This film shows the development of the child from introspective infant to socially conscious adult and how the parent can help him adjust to others.

Children Learning By Experience. 40 minutes. United World Films, 30
Rockefeller Center, New York,
N.Y.

This is a useful film for discussion groups because it is a series of episodes illustrating children reacting to different experiences. The film can be stopped after each episode for discussion of the incident and ways of handling it. It stimulates thinking on how adults can help children develop, what is the place for adult guidance, what kind of guidance is needed, and how it can be given.

A third area where the mother may be called on to help is in thinking through with her child the question of choice of vocations. What are some of the things he might talk over with his family when he is trying to analyze his own interests and abilities in order to decide on his field of work?

Let Your Child Help You. 10 minutes. New York Film Library, Washington Square, New York, N.Y.

Alice Koliher shows how young children may help at home and thus acquire a sense of achievement.

Vocational

Finding Your Life's Work. 22 minutes. Malinke Productions, Des Moines Iowa

This film shows the various considerations that go into the choice of a vocation: Aptitudes, educational record, character, interests, accomplishments, social assets, and financial ability to sustain oneself until employed. It also shows that another part of the analysis is to study the different types of occupations. The third suggestion is to see what school studies will help in a child's chosen field.

Topic 8

RELATIONS WITH THE OLDER GENERATION

Where does a wife draw the line between her duty to her children and to her husband when it becomes complicated by responsibilities to grandma, grandpa, and mother-in-law? How are the older people to be cared for, made to feel loved and wanted, kept occupied and independent? This is a problem faced by more and more wives as our population has an increasing number of older people to be cared for.

Life with Grandpa. 17 minutes. March of Time, 369 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

This film has not been previewed, but its title signifies that it will present the problem and probably some solutions.

Make Way for Tomorrow. 20 minutes. New York University Film Library, 26 Washington Square, New York, N.Y.

This is an old film, but it is useful to show the mother-in-law problem. The solution in the film is for the mother-in-law to go to a home for the aged. The discussion will have to bring out other ways of handling the problem.

When All The People Play. 23 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C.

This film tells the story of a small Canadian town which developed a fine recreational program. The old people in this picture are presented in normal surroundings, as a part of normal groups, having normal attitudes, disabilities and interests. The way they are brought into the life of the community is wholesome, offering ideas which might be copied in other places.

Topic 9

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS

The attitude of the wife and mother has an important effect on the family's relations with the community. No family lives in social isolation. Likewise the community's demands for the wife's services and participation may affect the family life. What is a proper balance? What are the values of this cooperation? How to get started and find your place in community enterprises or welfare work? The following films are examples of community participation in which a woman played a part, sometimes in forwarding the enterprise, sometimes being the stumbling block. The great problem not illustrated in these films is the conflict between the need for responsible and intelligent mothers and the demands upon those ~~same~~ mothers for work in the community. How is she going to meet this problem?

Fitness is a Family Affair. 15 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C.

This film was suggested in topic 6 as background for discussion of the importance of family environment in developing personality. Here it is suggested that the picture be studied to see how a family develops community spirit through recreational activities, and how participation in a community enterprise helps the wife in the disorganized family to develop a better atmosphere and cooperation in her home.

The Center. 2 reels. British Information Services, 1910 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

The setting for this film is the Pioneer Health Center at Peckham, England. It is designed and equipped as a club where the whole family can go to enjoy their leisure hours. The story is concerned with one particular family and its participation in the activities of the Health Center. We watch the resistance of the mother to joining, its effect on her husband, and the pleasure and enjoyment gained by the whole family when she eventually comes to appreciate how much it means to them all.

Who Is My Neighbor? 23 minutes. Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

The first half of this film is a history of the development of social services. The second half is a case study of the work of a typical community welfare agency as it solves some of the problems of a family very much in need of guidance. It shows the part that a trained woman can play in social service work, and brings out the need for a well-organized mother to run a family successfully. Personal integration, a knowledge of community resources and training in family administration are all important. Sometimes the perspective and helping hand of the trained social worker are needed to straighten things out.

Topic 10

THE WOMAN'S PART IN FAMILY PROBLEMS - CASE STUDIES FOR ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the following four films we pick up the story which comes to a head around a specific situation - a wife discovers she has gonorrhea, a boy lies to the police about damaging a neighbor's car, a production manager in a plant recommends firing his assistant because of his race, a mine worker is fired when he fails to mend a support in the mine. What are the causes that led up to these situations?

In all these pictures a woman has played a part at some point in the development of the problem, and is definitely involved in its solution. The roots of the trouble may lie in the generation before, the kind of family life or the family environment; they may be due to lack of character or false values; they may be the outcome of inadequate human relationships. The woman may be to blame, she may be the victim, or she may be the agent for the cure. In all cases she has a stake in the outcome and a responsibility to assume.

Why did this happen? How could it have been prevented? How much of the blame falls on some woman? Where will she turn for help in this crisis? What line of action can she take?

Parent-Child Relations

Salt Of The Earth. 50 minutes. Cathedral Films, 6404 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

Here is another example of poor parent-child relationships, and the kind of problems faced by mothers and wives. The setting of this film is a Pennsylvania mining town; the characters are miners and their families. In one particular family the father openly disapproves of his grown son's friends, goes to the mine and neglects to make repairs because he is arguing with the man he disapproves of. There is an accident as the result of his negligence, and he loses his job. How is the wife going to handle all these troubles? Looking back into the family past, why did all these things happen?

Unto Thyself Be True. 2 reels. Family Films, Inc., Hollywood 28, California

This is a picture of a breakdown in parent-child relationships. Because he feels his father lets him down, rides him too hard, etc., a young son takes the family car against orders, runs into a neighbor's car, and lies about it to the police. The film shows the father's attitude toward the son, his attitude toward his wife. What can the mother do to remedy the general situation? Is it due to her actions and efforts or have the pressures in today's life something to do with the husband's attitudes?

Sex

Miracle of Living. 39 minutes. Loan Army Institute of Pathology, Washington 25, D.C.

This is the story of a young couple, happy, ideally suited to each other, who are suddenly faced with the fact that a single premarital experience of the husband when he was overseas, has resulted in injury to the wife's child-bearing organs. The story is delicately, dramatically, handled, in excellent taste. It opens up discussion of sex education in general and of marriage counseling. Why did this happen? What courses of action are possible? What will be the most constructive attitudes to take?

Insecurity

Prejudice. 50 minutes. Religious Film Association, 45 Astor Place, New York, N.Y.

A man brings his wife and son to their new home in an industrial town where he is to become production manager in a plant. Racial prejudice arises when he begins to fear his job is threatened by the ability of his assistant. Is there any relationship between this fear and his wife's expenditures in "properly" furnishing their house? Is there any relationship between parent's attitudes and children's attitudes? How did the wife in this picture carry out her responsibilities?

FILM SOURCES

For lists of other films write to:

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington 25, D.C. . . .

Association Films, 35 West Forty-fifth Street, New York, N.Y.

British Information Service, 1910 K Street, N.W., Washington 5, D.C.

Canadian National Film Board, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Cathedral Films, 6404 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

Coronet Films, Coronet Building, Chicago, Illinois.

Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois

Family Films, Inc., Hollywood 28, California.

International Film Foundation, 1600 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

Mahnke Productions, Des Moines, Iowa

March of Time, 369 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

New York University Film Library, 26 Washington Square, New York, N.Y.

Religious Film Association, 45 Astor Place, New York, N.Y.

Teaching Films Custodials, 2 West Twentieth Street, New York, N.Y.

The Film Center, 915 Twelfth Street, Washington, D.C.

United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

United World Films, RCA Building, 30 Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y.

